

RESEARCH CONNECTION

Impacts of COVID-19 on women and caregivers at Canadian post-secondary institutions

By Lindsay McLachlan, MBA, CPA, CA



Photo by Ketut Subiyanto

Why this research is important

This study is one of the first to target women and caregivers working in accounting academia in Canada and is important in ensuring that we are working towards the goal of equity for all in the wake of the pandemic.

Understanding the issues faced is critical in addressing them. In addition, the same group that identified issues they are facing from the pandemic provides suggestions for how they can be helped moving forward.

How the research was conducted

Accounting professors across Canada were contacted via email and asked if they would write a submission and/or knew others fitting the profile who would be interested in the project.

What you need to know

COVID-19 has significantly impacted women and caregivers teaching and researching in the area of accounting at post-secondary institutions. This research highlights issues identified by accounting educators resulting from the pandemic as well as suggestions for help moving forward. Post-secondary institutions will need to consider how they are implementing policies and action to mitigate the pandemic's negative effects on these equity-seeking groups.

The willing contributors were asked to write a 750–1000-word submission addressing how the pandemic has impacted their teaching and research agendas.

Contributors were asked to answer the following questions:

- What specific changes have occurred in your life in the last year due to the pandemic that impacted your teaching and research agendas?
- What are the short-term (6–18 months) and projected long-term (18 months–5 years) implications of these changes?
- What would help you address the impact of COVID-19 in the areas described?

Twenty-three contributors submitted a write-up. Of the 10 Canadian provinces, there is representation from all except Quebec, New Brunswick, and Newfoundland.

Content analysis was used to identify and organize issues identified by the contributors, and the help they suggested would be beneficial.

What the researcher found

There were 38 separate issues identified in the contributions. The most common issues included:

- working from home—both pros and cons;
- lower productivity despite the additional time spent overall;
- mental health;
- loss of dedicated work time;
- research stopped or slowed;
- academic integrity concerns;
- lack of interaction with students;
- leaving academia; and
- flipped classroom.

Only the flipped classroom approach to learning was considered a positive issue. Overall, contributors identified issues that had negatively impacted their teaching and researching agendas.

These same contributors identified 24 different ways that they could be helped through this pandemic. Support from their institution, dean, department, chair and the academy was the way most contributors identified they would benefit. Other common ways academics would benefit included:

- additional funding;
- tenure and promotion committees to adjust standards; and
- option for a reduced workload.

How this research can be used

The findings show that women and caregivers have been significantly impacted by COVID-19. Post-secondary institutions can consider the ways that accounting academics have identified they would be helped when designing policies and allocating funds moving forward. The results identify the number one area of help is support. Support in the form of leadership at all levels, IT assistance for both professors and students, funding, and workloads are required.

About the researcher

Lindsay McLachlan is an assistant professor in the Department of Business Administration at Brandon University. Mclachlanl@brandonu.ca

Keywords

COVID-19, pandemic, women and caregivers, support, impacts

Acknowledgements

Thank you to the contributors and those who forwarded my email to colleagues to create awareness and acceptance of this study. Thank you to the 2020 CAAA-Deloitte Fund for Accounting Research for funding this project. Lastly, thank you to Steffany Peters for her excellent research assistance.

Research Connection is a periodical publication intended to provide information about the impact of Brandon University's academic research and expertise on public policy, social programming, and professional practice. This summary is supported by the Office of Research Services, the Centre for Aboriginal and Rural Education Studies, and the federally funded Research Support Fund.

Editor: Christiane Ramsey Ramseyc@brandonu.ca
<http://www.brandonu.ca/research-connection>